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THE NEW WORLD

POEMS

LAURENCE BINYON

PR

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1919



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THE NEW WORLD

BY THE SAME WRITER

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LONDON VISIONS

THE WINNOWING-FAN

THE ANVIL

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THE NEW WORLD

POEMS

BY LAURENCE BINYON

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MORN LIKE A THOUSAND SHINING SPEARS

MORN like a thousand shining spears
Terrible in the East appears.
O hide me, leaves of lovely gloom,
Where the young Dreams like lilies bloom !

What is this music that I lose
Now, in a world of fading clues ?
What wonders from beyond the seas
And wild Arabian fragrances ?

In vain I turn me back to where
Stars made a palace of the air.
In vain I hide my face away
From the too bright invading Day.

That which is come requires of me
My utter truth and mystery.
Return, you dreams, return to Night :
My lover is the armed Light.

THE NEW WORLD

To the people of the United States

Now is the time of the splendour of Youth and
Death.

The spirit of man grows grander than men knew.
The unbearable burden is borne, the impossible
done ;

Though harder is yet to do
Before this agony end, and that be won
We seek through blinding battle, in choking
breath,—

The New World, seen in vision ! Land of lands,
In the midst of storms that desolate and divide,
In the hour of the breaking heart, O far-
descried,

You build our courage, you hold up our hands.

Men of America, you that march to-day
Through roaring London, supple and lean of
limb,

Glimpsed in the crowd I saw you, and in your eye
Something alert and grim,

As knowing on what stern call you march away
To the wrestle of nations ; saw your heads held
high

And, that same moment, far in a glittering
beam

High over old and storied Westminster
The Stars and Stripes with England's flag astir,
Sisterly twined and proud on the air astream .

Men of America, what do you see ? Is it old
Towers of fame and grandeur time-resigned ?
The frost of custom's backward-gazing thought ?
Seek closer ! You shall find

Miracles hour by hour in silence wrought ;
Births, and awakenings ; dyings never tolled ;
Invisible crumble and fall of prison-bars.
O, wheresoever his home, new or decayed,
Man is older than all the things he has made
And yet the youngest spirit beneath the stars.

Rock-cradled, white, and soaring out of the
sea,

I behold again the fabulous city arise,
Manhattan ! Queen of thronged and restless
bays

And of daring ships is she.

THE NEW WORLD

O lands beyond, that into the sunset gaze,
Limitless, teeming continent of surmise !
I drink again that diamond air, I thrill
To the lure of a wonder more than the wondrous
 past,
And see before me ages yet more vast
Rising, to challenge heart and mind and will.

What sailed they out to seek, who of old came
To that bare earth and wild, unhistoried coast ?
Not gold, nor granaries, nay, nor a halcyon ease
For the weary and tempest-tost :
The unshaken soul they sought, possessed in
 peace.

What seek we now, and hazard all on the aim ?
In the heart of man is the undiscovered earth
Whose hope's our compass ; sweet with glorious
 passion
Of men's good-will ; a world to forge and
 fashion
Worthy the things we have seen and brought
 to birth.

Taps of the Drum ! Now once again they beat :
And the answer comes ; a continent arms.
 Dread,

Pity, and Grief, there is no escape. The call
Is the call of the risen Dead.

Terrible year of the nations' trampling feet !
An angel has blown his trumpet over all
From the ends of the earth, from East to utter-
most West,

Because of the soul of man, that shall not fail,
That will not make refusal, or turn, or quail,
No, nor for all calamity, stay its quest.

And here, here too, is the New World, born of
pain

In destiny-spelling hours. The old world breaks
Its mould, and life runs fierce and fluid, a stream
That floods, dissolves, re-makes.

Each pregnant moment, charged to its extreme,
Quickens unending future, and all's vain
But the onward mind, that dares the oncoming
years

And takes their storm, a master. Life shall then
Transfigure Time with yet more marvellous men.
Hail to the sunrise ! Hail to the Pioneers !

THE SOWER

(Eastern France)

FAMILIAR, year by year, to the creaking wain
Is the long road's level ridge above the plain.
To-day a battery comes with horses and guns
On the straight road, that under the poplars
runs,

At leisurely pace, the guns with mouths declined,
Harness merrily ringing, and dust behind.
Makers of widows, makers of orphans, they
Pass to their burial business, alert and gay.

But down in the field, where sun has the furrow
dried,
Is a man who walks in the furrow with even
stride.

At every step, with elbow jerked across,
He scatters seed in a quick, deliberate toss,
The immemorial gesture of Man confiding
To Earth, that restores tenfold in a season's
gliding.

He is grave and patient, sowing his children's
bread :

He treads the kindly furrow, nor turns his head.

STONEHENGE

GAUNT on the cloudy plain
Stand the great Stones,
Dwarfed in the vast reach
Of a sky that owns

All the measure of earth
Within its cloud-hung cave.
Dumb stands the Circle
As on a God's grave.

But clattering with horses
Up from the valley,
With horses and horsemen
At a trot, gaily

Dragging the limbered guns,
Youth comes riding,—
Easy sits, mettlesome
Horses bestriding.

STONEHENGE

Fast come the twinkling hoofs,
Light wheels and guns,
Invading the upland,
And sweep past the Stones.

Giant those shapes now
Over them tower,—
Time's dark stature
Over Youth's fleet hour.

Ribs of dismemoried Earth,
Guard what you may !
The Immortals also
Pass, nor stay.

GUNS AT THE FRONT

MAN, simple and brave, easily confiding,
 Giving his all, glad of the sun's sweetness,
 Heeding little of pitiful incompleteness,
 Mending life with laughter and cheerful chiding,

Where is he ?—I see him not, but I hear
 Sounds, charged with nothing but death and
 maiming ;

Earth and sky empty of all but flaming
 Bursts, and shocks that stun the waiting ear ;

Monsters roaring aloud with hideous vastness,
Nothing, Nothing, Nothing ! And man that
 made them

Mightier far than himself, has stooped, and
 obeyed them,

Schooled his mind to endure its own aghastness,

Serving death, destruction, and things inert,—
 He the soarer, free of heavens to roam in,

He whose heart has a world of light to home in,
Confounding day with darkness, flesh with dirt.

O, dear indeed the cause that so can prove him,
Pitilessly self-tested ! If no cause beacons
Beyond this chaos, better he bled unreckoned,
With his own monsters bellowing madness above
him.

THE WITNESSES

I

LADS in the loose blue,
Crutched, with limping feet,
With bandaged arm, that roam
To-day the bustling street,

You humble us with your gaze,
Calm, confiding, clear ;
You humble us with a smile
That says nothing but cheer.

Our souls are scarred with you !
Yet, though we suffered all
You have suffered, all were vain
To atone, or to recall

The robbed future, or build
The maimed body again
Whole, or ever efface
What men have done to men.

THE WITNESSES

II

Each body of straight youth,
Strong, shapely, and marred,
Shines as out of a cloud
Of storm and splintered shard,

Of chaos, torture, blood,
Fire, thunder, and stench :
And the savage shattering noise
Of churned and shaken trench

Echoes through myriad hearts
In the dumb lands behind ;—
Silent wailing, and bitter
Tears of the world's mind !

You stand upon each threshold
Without complaint.—What pen
Dares to write half the deeds
That men have done to men ?

III

Must we be humbled more ?
Peace, whose olive seems
A tree of hope and heaven,
Of answered prayers and dreams,

Peace has her own hid wounds ;
She also grinds and maims.
And must we bear and share
Those old continued shames ?

Not only the body's waste
But the mind's captivities—
Crippled, sore, and starved—
The ignorant victories

Of the visionless, who serve
No cause, and fight no foe !
Is a cruelty less sure
Because its ways are slow ?

Now we have eyes to see.
Shall we not use them then ?
These bright wounds witness
What men may do to men.

I AM HERE, AND YOU

I AM here, and you ;
The sun blesses us through
Leaves made of light.
The air is in your hair ;
You hold a flower.

O worlds, that roll through night,
O Time, O terrible year,
Where surges of fury and fear
Rave, to us you gave
This island-hour.

DARK WIND

IN the middle of the night, waking, I was aware
Of the Wind like one riding through black wastes
of the air,
Moodily riding, ever faster, he recked not where.

The windows rattled aloud : a door clashed and
sprang ;
And the ear in fear waited to feel the inert clang
Strike the shaken darkness, a cruelty and a
pang.

I was hurt with pity of things that have no will
of their own,
Lifted in lives of others and cast on bruising
stone :
I feared the Wind, coming a power from worlds
unknown.

It was like a great ship now, abandoned, her
crew dead,
Driving in gulfs of sky ; it staggered above and
sped ;
I lay in the deeps and heard it rushing over
my head.

And the helpless shaking of window and door's
desolate rebound
Seemed like tossing and lifting of bodies lost
and drowned
In the huge indifferent swell, in the waters'
wandering sound.

HUNGER

I COME among the peoples like a shadow.
I sit down by each man's side.

None sees me, but they look on one another,
And know that I am there.

My silence is like the silence of the tide
That buries the playground of children ;

Like the deepening of frost in the slow night,
When birds are dead in the morning.

Armies trample, invade, destroy,
With guns roaring from earth and air.

I am more terrible than armies,
I am more feared than the cannon.

Kings and chancellors give commands ;
I give no command to any ;

HUNGER

But I am listened to more than kings
And more than passionate orators.

I unswear words, and undo deeds.
Naked things know me.

I am first and last to be felt of the living.
I am Hunger.

STRIKE STONE ON STEEL

STRIKE stone on steel,
Fire replies.
Strike men that feel,
The answer is in their eyes.

Powers that are willed to break
The spirit in limbs of pain,
See what spirit you wake !
Strike, and strike again !

You hammer sparks to a flame,
And the flame scorches your hand.
You have given the feeble an aim,
You have made the sick to stand.

You shape by stroke on stroke
Man mightier than he knew ;
And the fire your hammer woke
Is a life that is death to you.

SPRING HAS LEAPT INTO SUMMER

SPRING has leapt into Summer.
A glory has gone from the green.
The flush of the poplar has sobered out,
The flame in the leaf of the lime is dulled :
But I am thinking of the young men
Whose faces are no more seen.

Where is the pure blossom
That fell and refused to grow old ?
The clustered radiance, perfumed whiteness,
Silent singing of joy in the blue ?
—I am thinking of the young men
Whose splendour is under the mould.

Youth, the wonder of the world,
Open-eyed at an opened door,
When the world is as honey in the flower, and
as wine
To the heart, and as music newly begun !

O the young men, the myriads of the young men,
Whose beauty returns no more !

Spring will come, when the Earth remembers,
In sun-bursts after the rain,
And the leaf be fresh and lovely on the bough,
And the myriad shining blossom be born :
But I shall be thinking of the young men
Whose eyes will not shine on us again.

THE ENGLISH YOUTH

THERE is a dimness fallen on old fames.
 Our hearts are solemnized with dearer names
 Than Time is bright with : we have not heard
 alone,

Or read of it in books ; it is our own
 Eyes that have seen this wonder ; like a song,
 It is in our mouths for ever. There was wrong
 Done, and the world shamed. Honour blew the
 call ;

And each one's answer was as natural
 And quiet as the needle's to the pole.
 Who gave must give himself entire and whole.
 So, books were shut ; and young dreams shaken
 out

In cold air ; dear ambitions done without,
 And a stark duty shouldered. And yet they
 Who now must narrow to their arduous day
 Did not forget their nurture, nor the kind
 Muses of earth, nor joys of eager mind,—
 Graced in their comradeship, and prizing more
 Life's beauty, and all the sweetness at the core,

Because of that loathed business they were set
To do and finish. It was the world's debt,
Claiming all: but they knew, and would not wince
From that exaction on their flesh; and since
They did not seek for glory, our hearts add
A more than glory to that hope they had
And gloriously and terribly achieved.

O histories of old time, half-believed,
None needs to wrong the modesty of truth
In matching with your legend England's youth.
But all renown that fearless arms could win
For proud adventuring wondrous Paladin
Is glimmering laurel now: Romance, that was
The coloured air of a forgotten cause
About the heads of heroes dead and bright,
Shines home. We are accompanied with light
Because of youth among us; and the name
Of man is touched with an ethereal flame;
There is a newness in the world begun,
A difference in the setting of the sun.
Oh, though we stumble in blinding tears, and
 though
The beating of our hearts may never know
Absence in pangs more desolately keen,
Yet blessed are our eyes because they have seen.

OXFORD IN WAR-TIME

WHAT alters you, familiar lawn and tower,
Arched alley, and garden green to the grey wall
With crumbling crevice and the old wine-red
 flower,
Solitary in summer sun ? for all

Is like a dream : I tread on dreams ! No stir
Of footsteps, voices, laughter ! Even the chime
Of many-remembered bells is lonelier
In this neglected ghostliness of Time.

What stealing touch of separation numb
Absents you ? Yet my heart springs up to adore
The shrining of your soul, that is become
Nearer and oh, far dearer than before.

It is as if I looked on the still face
Of a Mother, musing where she sits alone.
She is with her sons, she is not in this place ;
She is gone out into far lands unknown.

Because that filled horizon occupies
 Her heart with mute prayer and divining fear,
 Therefore her hands so calm lie, and her eyes
 See nothing ; and men wonder at her here :

But far in France ; on the torn Flanders plain ;
 By Sinai ; in the Macedonian snows ;
 The fly-plagued sands of Tigris, heat and rain ;
 On wandering water, where the black squall
 blows

Less danger than the bright wave ambushes,
 She bears it out. All the long day she bears
 And the sudden hour of instant challenges
 To act, that searches all men, no man spares.

She is with her sons, leaving a virtue gone
 Out of her sacred places : what she bred
 Lives other life than this, that sits alone,
 Though still in dream starrily visited !

For O in youth she lives, not in her age.
 Her soul is with the springtime and the young ;
 And she absents her from the learned page,
 Studious of high histories yet unsung,

More passionately prized than wisdom's book
Because her own. Her faith is in those eyes
That clear into the gape of hell can look,
Putting to proof ancient philosophies

Such as the virgin Muses would rehearse
Beside the silvery, swallow-haunted stream,
Under the grey towers. But immortal verse
Is now exchanged for its immortal theme—

Victory ; proud loss ; and the enduring mind ;
Youth, that has passed all praises, and has won
More than renown, being that which faith
divined,
Reality more radiant than the sun.

She gave, she gives, more than all anchored days
Of dedicated lore, of storied art ;
And she resigns her beauty to men's gaze
To mask the riches of her bleeding heart.

THE DEAD TO THE LIVING

O you that still have rain and sun,
Kisses of children and of wife
And the good earth to tread upon,
And the mere sweetness that is life,
Forget not us, who gave all these
For something dearer, and for you.
Think in what cause we crossed the seas !
Remember, he who fails the Challenge
Fails us too.

Now in the hour that shows the strong—
The soul no evil powers affray—
Drive straight against embattled Wrong :
Faith knows but one, the hardest, way.
Endure ; the end is worth the throe.
Give, give, and dare ; and again dare !
On, to that Wrong's great overthrow.
We are with you, of you ; we the pain
And victory share.

KITCHENER

THIS is the man who, sole in Britain, sole
In Europe, by profounder instinct, knew
The strength of Britain ; and that strength he
drew

Slow into act, upshouldering the whole
Vast weight of effort. Eyes full on the goal
Saw nothing less ; he held his single clue,
Heedless of obstacle ; intent to do
His one task forthright with unshaken soul.

This is the man whom, dead, the meanest match
With their own stature ; give tongue, and grow
brave

On the imperfection fools have wit to espy.
His silence towers the grander for their cry,
Troubling his fame no more than yelp and
scratch
Of jackal could disturb that ocean-grave.

THE TEST

NAKED reality, and menace near
 As fire to scorching flesh, shall not affright
 The spirit that sees, with danger-sharpened
 sight,
 What it must save or die for ; not the mere
 Name, but the thing, now doubly, trebly dear,
 Freedom ; the breath those hands would choke ;
 the light
 They would put out ; the clean air they would
 blight,
 Making earth rank with hate, and greed, and
 fear.

Now no man's loss is private : all share all.
 Oh, each of us a soldier stands to-day,
 Put to the proof and summoned to the call ;
 One will, one faith, one peril. Hearts, be high,
 Most in the hour that's darkest ! Come what
 may,
 The soul in us is found, and shall not die.

YPRES

SHE was a city of patience ; of proud name,
Dimmed by neglecting Time ; of beauty and
loss ;

Of acquiescence in the creeping moss.

But on a sudden fierce destruction came

Tigerishly pouncing : thunderbolt and flame

Showered on her streets, to shatter them and
toss

Her ancient towers to ashes. Riven across,

She rose, dead, into never-dying fame.

White against heavens of storm, a ghost, she is
known

To the world's ends. The myriads of the brave
Sleep round her. Desolately glorified,

She, moon-like, draws her own far-moving tide
Of sorrow and memory ; toward her, each alone,
Glide the dark Dreams that seek an English
grave.

SOME of these poems have appeared before in the pages of the *Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Observer*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Spectator*, *Country Life*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Collegian*; and for permission to reprint them I have to thank the Editors.

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By LAURENCE BINYON

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